



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

Dinas A Sir Abertawe

Councillor Christine Richards
Cabinet Member for Services for Children
& Young People

BY EMAIL

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6 November 2014

Dear Councillor Richards,

Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel 15 October 2014

As you will recall, the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Panel received a service briefing on the Flying Start Programme from Sian Bingham, along with key members of her team, at our meeting on 15 October 2014. You were unable to attend due to leave commitments, therefore I am writing to you in order to capture the main issues discussed and the views expressed by the Panel. We are very grateful to the officers who attended for the advice and information they provided.

The decision to look at the Flying Start Programme in more detail arose as part of our on-going performance monitoring. We noted from the End of Year Performance report that a number of the targets relating to this area had not been set due to new data gathering methods. We were also aware of the risk identified with the expansion of the programme that was highlighted in Corporate Improvement Plan, which noted that *“due to the scale of the expansion [of the Flying Start Programme] improving upon or even maintaining results is now a massive challenge. Service projections have been revised to reflect this”*. Therefore we requested a service briefing to enable us to understand the performance issues around this service in more detail.

As part of this work we were invited by Sian Bingham to attend the Seaview Flying Start setting in Mayhill. This was a very useful visit which helped us gain a better insight into the work of Flying Start and understand the challenges it is tackling. We

are grateful to the staff members who gave up their time to meet with us and answer our questions.

We were delighted to hear that Swansea Flying Start is recognised at a national level as good practice by the Welsh Government and that it is also cited as good practice by experts in the field, further demonstrated by the fact that its approach has been replicated by other authorities in Wales. We were interested to learn about its positive aspects including:

- It follows an integrated model between health and the Local Authority. Service delivery and more recently management are co-located and this has enabled very good working relationships.
- It has drawn in additional funding on top of Welsh Government Flying Start money, such as Families First, which has enabled some key services to be available across Swansea, such as the Family Partnership Team.
- Data collection is central to the management of the programme. Regular termly visits are carried out by the management team to each Flying Start setting where they meet with staff and analyse the data from the previous term.
- The programme tracks children across Flying Start and throughout their school careers.
- Schools report a positive impact on school readiness and better engagement with parents
- Flying Start is felt to be achieving successful early intervention and reducing the escalation of need into statutory Child and Family Services. An example of this is via the low step up rate of families receiving a pathway of support via the Parenting entitlement of the Flying Start Programme. This “step up” into Child & Family Services is less than 2% over the last 3 years.
- Performance is above the national average for a number of indicators.

We discussed the performance figures and gained a better understanding of how the expansion of the programme can affect the figures, for example the recruitment of staff to work in new childcare settings has created vacancies in established Flying Start settings, which temporarily reduces the number of childcare places available; registration requirements with CSSIW; recruitment issues for Health Visitors; time taken for parents to become accustomed to the new services on offer.

Despite the potential difficulties in maintaining performance we were advised that the data continues to show strong performance, particularly considering the fact that the programme is still being rolled out and there has not yet been a static period where progress can be consolidated. For example: 79% take up of childcare places and 80% attendance has been maintained.

We see Flying Start as an extremely positive programme that is having a significant impact on the lives of children living in our more deprived communities. We will continue to monitor Flying Start performance through our regular corporate reports on quarterly and annual performance monitoring, however we are now able to do this with a much better understanding of the service and the issues it is facing.

This letter provides our views on the service but does not give any further recommendations; therefore a response is not required. However, this letter will be included in the next available agenda of the Scrutiny Programme Committee as the committee maintains an overview of all scrutiny activities, and monitors correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Councillor Mary Jones
Convenor, Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel
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